UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1992/NGO/7
12 February 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-sixth session
Vienna, 11-20 March 1992
Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda*

PRIORITY THEMES

DEVELOPMENT: INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT; WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Statement submitted by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: International Organization of Consumers Union, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Soroptimist International, Women's International Democratic Federation, Zonta International (category I); Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), Disabled Peoples' International, International Federation of University Women, International Abolitionist Federation, International Council of Jewish Women, Italian Centre of Solidarity, Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs) (International Movement of Catholic Students), Women's International Zionist Organization, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Young Women's Christian Association (category II); and International Inner Wheel, International Association of Charities and World Peace Council (roster)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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The above-mentioned non-governmental organizations, interested in and engaged for a present and future healthy environment for all people, are concerned about the fact that only a few women worldwide constitute an extremely small percentage of those who participate in environmental decision-making, and we therefore urge Governments to ensure that the Earth Charter includes both women and men in its rights and obligations and that the perceptions and priorities of women be fully reflected therein.

Therefore the above-mentioned non-governmental organizations:

Bearing in mind the summary report of the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment: "Partners in Life", held from 4 to 8 November 1991, at Miami, Florida, United States of America,

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Appreciating the recommendations of that Global Assembly for a sustainable future,

Fully aware of the complexity of the problem,

Recognizing the close interconnection of global economic, social, political and environmental conceptions and activities,

Mindful of the fact that already one third of the earth surface is infertile because of the spreading of large urban areas and deserts and that thousands of plants and animals have disappeared,

Paying attention to the additional heavy strain on a high-risk environment caused by fast population growth, mainly affecting the health and well-being of women and their children,

Noting that in many parts of the world there is a significant increase in the incidence of physical and mental disabilities due to a devastated environment,

Taking into account that women are increasingly more concerned about the environment as they are the main care givers, food producers, managers of natural resources and consumers at home, observing increasingly the often immediate effect of an unhealthy environment harming them, their children and family members,

Urge Governments to quickly respond to the pressing problem of the deteriorating environment which crosses all existing national borders and to achieve a basic goal which assures a healthy environment by:

Hearing the voices of women and recognizing environmental women's groups and non-governmental organizations working successfully at the grass-roots level;

Making use of women's experiences and talents at all decision-making levels concerning the environment;

Promoting responsible equal participation in the process of democratization;

Stopping arbitrary exploitation of non-renewable resources, the dumping of toxic waste and the further destruction of the environment by excessive consumption habits;

Sharing safe technology, know-how and information to guarantee safe water, air and healthy living conditions;

Appealing to the World Bank and other national and international financial bodies to facilitate debt relief for the poor countries and to ensure humane living conditions;

Stressing prevention programmes and environmental education;

Creating independent institutions of experts to consider the possible future consequences of today's ecological situation;

Giving incentives to reward positive attitudes and actions to create a healthy and sustainable environment;

Penalizing negative attitudes and actions causing damage to the environment;

Compensating people who have been disabled by an unhealthy environment e.g. Chernobyl, Bhopal, Love Canal and others;

Preventing armed conflicts;

Favouring a policy of common sense before a policy of power;

Promoting peace and justice and a responsible positive attitude towards life and nature to create an environment for the survival of humankind.